

A

# REVIEW

OF THE

# STATE

OF THE

# BRITISH NATION.

---

Saturday, July 1. 1710.

---

**I**N my Discourse of the *African* Affair, I am speaking of the Company's Creditors. I am sure I am no Advocate for them Personally, I should be pleading for something they desire; whereas, methinks my task lyes two ways, and both very odly Circumstanc'd.

I am on one hand Pleading with the Opposers of the Company, that they should not Disable them from paying their Debts; and on the other hand, Pleading with the Creditors to be willing to be paid.

This is very hard you will say, and has some Difficulty in Appearance to be reconcil'd to Truth; and yet nothing is more Plain: *The Company*, If I may judge by what Appears, *Are*, if Justice may be done

them, **ABLE**; and if the Proposals they have made to the World are sincere, **VERY WILLING** to Pay their whole Debts, Principal and Interest. Let us a little Enquire whether we ought to believe them sincere or no, and whether their Abilities to Pay are real or no: For certainly, all Men will grant, if they are Able and Willing, they ought neither to be Disabled or Discourag'd; and if they are Disabled, the Debt ought to lye at the Door of those that do Disable them.

It is not for me to determine who can legally Disable them; and they that would fain bring me in here reflecting on the Parliament, are mistaken: For I cannot believe, nor ever could, and often told the

the contending Parties of it. They cannot indeed expect to bring the Government into a Robbery. The Commons in Parliament are the Security of the Subjects Property, but never take the Subjects Property violently away from them. 'Tis Insulting the Parliament to suggest, That they will divest Men of their Estates, and not give them leave to dispose of 'em for a valuable Consideration: I would fain Desire the Gentlemen that are of another Opinion, to tell me whenever a Parliament did so.

But if such a Monstrous thing should happen, as I am perswaded it never can, while the Constitution of *Britain* remains, I cannot help saying, let it be Parliament, or who it will, if they take violently from any Man, or Company of Men, what they might fully, and would freely Pay their Debts with, they ought to Pay their Debts for them; for legally speaking, *Debts must be Paid*.

Nor indeed has any thing appear'd in the Parliament to make the World imagin they would do otherwise; but the Projects of other Men have been obvious, who would divest the Company of their Property without a valuable Consideration; and would have the Company's Effects bevest'd in themselves; *that is, they would be the Company*; they would have all the Company's Power, without their Incombrance; they would have all their Effects without being oblig'd to Pay their Debts, or at least they would Pay them as far as the Produce only went, when they had given away the just Valuation, and Sold them for any Trifle they think fit; just as Goods Sold in Execution, which generally produce not a third Part of the Value, and leave the Debtor naked, and his Debts unpaid. Of this barbarous Attempt, and some particular Knavery which appear'd visible in it, I may have leisure to speak more at large, if ever it comes before a Parliament again; and I am perswaded when the Monster comes to be Strip'd Naked, it will look like *Oldham's* Statue of a *Jesuit*, which in its Original was a pissing Post, but Dress'd up, was Worship'd for a Saint.

But the next thing before me is to persuade the Creditors to be willing to be paid. One would think this was a wild Notion that could have nothing in it: Every one will be forward enough to say it is ridiculous to suggest it. No Man can be suppos'd unwilling to have his Debt. Do they not Sell their Bonds at great Abatement? And offer a Discount too big almost to be nam'd, to get their Money? Do they not eagerly bid for the Company's Goods, and Buy them at an Extravagant Advance of Price? Do they not by these Discounts on one Hand, and Advances on the other, testify their willingness even to take a Half for the Whole? How can it be said then they want to be perswaded to be willing to be Paid?

Why truly the Thing at first Sight has these seeming Contradictions in it, but upon a nearer View, and Examining a little the Matter of Fact, it will appear evident, That, *in my Sense*, they are not willing to be Paid. He that is fallen into a River, and having a Boat at hand to help him, or some Rope or Staff handed to him to take hold on, but refuses to take hold, and will by his own Swimming make for the Shoar; if his Strength fails, and his Art in Swimming cannot Land him, and he Drowns; Will you not see, That Man was not willing to be sav'd? He that will not make use of probable Means to effect a Thing, may certainly be said not to be sufficiently willing to effect it. The Man that Swims as above, designs *no doubt* to Land, but were he as willing to secure his Landing, as a clear view of his distance ought to have made him, he would have taken the more immediate help of a Boat, &c. I could Illustrate the Thing by innumerable Similes of this kind, but 'tis needless; the Case is so clear, no Man can want help to see it. Had the Creditors of the *African* Company been as willing to be Paid, as the Danger of never being Paid ought to have made them, they would rather have join'd with the Company, in finding out the most proper Method of Payment, than have join'd in a Design of Destroying the Company, and disabling them for ever paying them at all.



For the Creditors to fall in with Measures to Dissolve the Company, Ruin their Stock, and Divest them of their Property, which are the only Funds from which their Demands can be Satisfy'd, Will any Man say, This implies a willingness of being Paid? Will any Man say, This argues a View of the Danger of losing their Debts? Men in the Raging of a Feavour, leap out of Bed, throw themselves into the Cold, and Dis Lunaticks; tear off their Plasters, and reject their Medicines. Can any one say in those Fits, They are willing to be Cur'd? A willingness of Cure can only appear in a patient Application of proper Remedies, the rest is all light-headed Phrenzy, and Tends to their own Destruction.

This brings me to Examine two Things,

1. The Improbability and Inconsistency of the Schemes, which some Creditors have fallen in with, upon pretence of getting Payment of their Debts, not for getting the Justice and Honesty of them.
2. The Reasonableness and Probability of such Methods as the Company has at several Times propos'd for the Payment of their Debts.

From hence an easie Application will tell any Man who is a Creditor of the *African*-Company, what he ouget to do; and whether it is his Interest to Destroy the Company, and Disable them from Payment of any Body; or to join with such Proposals for Upholding and Supporting the Company as may enable them to pay the whole Debts.

And this will be my next Subject.

## MISCELLANEA.

I Have all along spar'd a Part of this Paper for the Affair of the Coal-Trade, another Point in which we were falling even Legally, and Magistratickly into the most preposterous Error; by which we should in one Year put it into the Power of about 24000 Men, to have raised a Tax of an Hundred Thousand Pounds a Year upon the City of London; and have made many Thousand Families of Sailors, Owners of Ships, Masters, and poor Keelmen, the most Subjected Slaves that ever this Free Nation saw, or perhaps heard of.

They were come to that Height here, as I have already noted, That no Man could sell his Coals at all, but such as the Ten Lightermen pleas'd; and they frequently Met, and set what Price they pleas'd upon the Market; Declaring by their Absolute Authority, That no Man should Sell for more.

At *New-Castle*, the Contractors were come to that Height, that they had Erected a Coal-Chamber, or Coal-Office;

where they made By-Laws, impos'd Regulations and Fines upon the poor Keelmen, by their own Arbitrary Authority: And I cannot but humbly Propose it to those Gentlemen, That they would prepare to defend those Practices very Vigorously before the next Parliament; where I can assure them, they will be set in a very clear Light; and where no Combination, Support of mistaken Magistrates, or Power over the Oppress'd Keelmen will be of any Use to them; and where, if I am not very much Mistaken in what I have seen and perus'd, and have by me to produce, there will not want evidence of Fact to Convict them of most unsufferable Oppressions.

They may read something of their Fate in the Consequence of the late Hearing before the Council present; where the Combination of the Collier-Masters was apparently prov'd to be a Necessity they were driven to in their own Defence, against a Contract at *New-Castle*, more justly call'd a Combination; and by which

the Trade was brought to the Brink of Ruin, as will be seen by the By-Laws, or Regulations of the Coal-Chamber above-said, which I Publish'd in my Last; where they take upon them to Appoint what Price the Foreign shall pay, what Price the Coasting Trade shall pay, and what the London Trade; in which the London Trade was always to pay more by 12 d. and 6 d. per Chaldron than others; and in a Letter written by a certain Officer of the Coal-Office above, to his Dealer in London, the Original of which I have by me, and shall produce on Occasions, after having Describ'd their new Measures, he concludes, *And now it may be seen, THAT IF THE CONTRACT HOLD, the Masters shall have no Coals in this River, but as the Office shall direct.*

And what shall we say for the poor Keelmen, viz. The Men that carry the Coals down the Tyne in Vessels like Lighters, call'd Keels, and Load them on Board the Ships: These are, as I am inform'd, not fewer than Four Thousand Men, besides their Families. The Interruption of the Trade has taken their Employment from them, and they are left Starving, and in the utmost Distress. They are not so Ignorant as not to know the Contract, as they call it, *that is* the Combination of the Coal-Owners at New-Castle, and the Lightermen at London, *is the Cause of it*: And it is a Wonder to me, I confess, that Misery and Poverty has not provoked them to Demolish

the Contract; a Way no honest Man can desire them to do it: But Hunger knows no Laws; and *as Oppression makes a wise Man mad*, so want of Bread makes honest Men Thieves, peaceable Men Tumultuous; and had these poor People fallen into any Excesses, as they have been hardly kept from, I must own the Coal-Owners ought to have Answer'd for the Consequence.

Nor can the Magistrates of New-Castle speaking with all possible Respect, themselves be unconcern'd, upon whom the Care of keeping the Peace there, lies. And no doubt *they ought to suppose*, the Directions given by her Majesty to the Lord Mayor, and Aldermen of London, concerns them also, viz. That they should take Care to Discourage and Dissolve these Original Combinations, which have been the Occasion of this Interruption of the Trade, that it may be Open and Free as formerly; and the Employment of the Poor, which is their Bread, may no more be taken from them. And this is the best way to keep the Peace; the other Method tending only to encrease the Mischief, enrage the common People, raise Disturbances too great for the Civil Authority to Crush; and in the End bring the Military Force upon them: The Consequences of which to their Corporation, none can Account for; and I can assure them, if this is not done, they will soon hear farther of it; for things cannot remain at this pass.